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SUBJECT: MONUC INVESTIGATES UPDF INCURSIONS INTO DRC

REF: KINSHASA 661

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Following the reported April 25 incursion of Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) troops into the DRC near Aba (reftel), MONUC dispatched a joint verification mission to the area to investigate. The MONUC team concluded that elements of the UPDF had infiltrated DRC territory, but the team could not determine the UPDF's motives for doing so, as "no one could confirm the presence" of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the area. Meanwhile, FARDC sources near the DRC-Sudan border report that UPDF forces again crossed into the DRC May 1. End summary.

RESULTS OF MONUC MISSION TO ABA

¶2. (C) MONUC sent a 10-person team of MONUC and Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) personnel to Aba April 28 to investigate reports of UPDF incursions into the DRC on April 25. FARDC troops who were in the area reported that approximately 300 armed elements -- later discovered to be from the UPDF -- crossed into the DRC via the Aba-Lasso road on the DRC-Sudan border. The UPDF forces had reportedly entered DRC territory after engaging LRA elements in Sudan near the border with the DRC. A FARDC patrol was subsequently dispatched to pursue the infiltrators, eventually intercepting them near Adau (south of Aba) on April 26. FARDC soldiers involved told the MONUC team that the UPDF troops fired first on the Congolese soldiers. The resulting firefight reportedly lasted more than an hour until UPDF forces withdrew towards Sudan through Langabe. Residents of Langabe told the MONUC team they saw the retreating UPDF troops carrying three bodies wrapped in military ponchos.

¶3. (C) The MONUC team interviewed FARDC Lt. Bertin Sagwa, who led the operation on April 25. Sagwa reported that he and his colleagues were positive the troops they engaged were from the UPDF. FARDC troops stationed in the area were also asked about the presence of LRA elements. According to these FARDC troops, "no LRA elements were reported in their (area of operation) since they had escorted Vincent Otti's group to Sudan" in October 2005.

¶4. (C) The MONUC verification team reported that there remains "little doubt" that UPDF troops entered the DRC April 25. The team reported that the UPDF's motives for the incursion remain unclear, though, as "no one could confirm the presence of LRA in the area." The team's report states that the possibility exists that some LRA elements infiltrated the DRC after the attacks in Lasso April 25 and could have headed towards Morobo (in Sudan), crossing through

DRC territory.

NEW UPDF INCURSIONS INTO DRC

15. (C) FARDC officers subsequently reported to MONUC officials that the UPDF has crossed into the DRC after the April 25 incident. According to FARDC Aru Battalion Commander Major Esongola, a UPDF border security officer visited the FARDC position in Ingbokolo (approximately 40 miles north of Aru) and warned the FARDC troops that UPDF forces would be conducting patrols into the DRC "to deter LRA infiltration into Uganda from Sudan through DRC." On May 2, Congolese intelligence and FARDC forces were reportedly informed by local sources that three UPDF platoons crossed into DRC territory and patrolled Aru territory in the area of Adi (approximately 40 miles north of Aru) on the night of May 1. According to Esongola, the FARDC made contact with UPDF commanders in Arua (Uganda) and warned them that the FARDC would deter any incursion of "foreign armed elements". MONUC military observers report that FARDC troops in Aru are now attempting to find hard evidence of the UPDF's presence in the DRC.

16. (C) FARDC officials also reported to MONUC that the UPDF has deployed troops in the vicinity of Kengezi, an SPLA base near the DRC-Sudan border (some 50 miles north of Aru). MONUC military observers in Aru have also been informed by FARDC commanders that the UPDF has deployed two battalions with heavy equipment and new weapons on the Ugandan side close to the border with the DRC. These reinforcements are reportedly stationed in Alio-Tskau and Kampala village. While FARDC

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officials said they did not know the intent of these new troops, they said they believed their deployment was "normal." MONUC officials, however, have said they believe the UPDF is building up its troop level and is using the threat of the LRA in the DRC "as a pretext to enter DRC territory and protect their business interests, like the illegal exploitation of wood and/or gold."

COMMENT

17. (C) The Ugandan threat to conduct independent patrols in DRC territory is being taken seriously by the Congolese. Although reliable information remains hard to come by in the border areas, it appears some UPDF forces have crossed into the DRC at least twice in the last week. End comment.
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